

PROFESSIONAL pride dimmed yet again as, for the fourth time this season, Wycombe Wanderers humbled Southern League opposition. Latest victims, Banbury United were taught the meaning of teamwork in Saturday's 2nd qualifying round F.A. Cup tie.

Like Bath City, Cheltenham Town and Hillingdon Borough before them, they staggered under the blows dealt by a Wycombe side playing with considerably more understanding and combined flair than they themselves could muster.

Individually the rivals were equal in stature and style. But class was with Wanderers.

In defence, skipper John Delaney and his England partner, Ted Powell, quietly, efficiently blotted out a Banbury attack which averages almost two goals per game this season.

And favoured in place of John Maskell, goalkeeper Kevin O'Brien, far outshone his counterpart, Stewart Rennie, whose nightmare only began with the taunts of the visiting supporters behind him.

Upon Rennie the blame for,

MIKE WHITESMAN reports

at very least, Wycombe's third goal lies. Some more charitable might forgive him the first, and only partly accuse him of erring in the second—even though it was eventually an own goal scored by the keeper himself.

But his performance could have done nothing to add any confidence to the Banbury back-row. They had troubles enough of their own in holding down Keith Searle. Bouncing back to form with much of the vigour lacking from his football since August, Searle upset all plans to cover him out of the game, and was first to put Wycombe ahead.

Wanderers played strongly on their centre-forward's new lease of life, which perhaps accounts for the quieter than normal supporting roles adopted by wingers Geoff Anthony and Johnny Hutchinson.

Larry Pritchard, however, popped in and out of the Banbury defensive network with disarming regularity, while from midfield, Bernie Bremer came forward to deliver several long range, but nonetheless unsettling shots.

Whether this asset can justify Tony Horseman's omission is questionable. Yet Banbury were kept too busy to open a debate on the subject.

The Southern Leaguers, confronted by a brand of football almost alien to them, took time to adapt; and here in itself was an advantage for Wanderers to cultivate. For the amateurs made no concessions as to their style, characteristically taking the game to their opponents as often as possible.

Until half-time, however, Banbury met and countered the

Banbury United 0, Wycombe Wanderers 3

Blues' positive approach to pull their weight in an uncompromising 45 minutes of cup-tie soccer.

While pint-sized Alan Hellyer roamed menacingly on the right wing anything could happen. Charlie Gale—a canny but slow-moving campaigner—was still seeking a way of chaining the Banbury firebrand, when United unaccountably switched him to the left, where he found Paul Fuschillo a different proposition altogether.

Why the switch? Whatever the reason, it seemed then, and even more so now, an incredible manoeuvre, and could ultimately have swung the entire tie.

Banbury had twice sent spies to watch Wanderers in Isthmian League combat, and so were relatively prepared for the early push their visitors made. In the

first minute Dick Spiers conceded a free-kick and the Blues made good use of it. Bremer found Pritchard, whose header forced Rennie to scramble the ball away.

Tony Foster, leading goalscorer at Banbury last season, twice made life uncomfortable for the Wycombe defence in the early minutes, and, from Hellyer's cross, headed the ball on to the underside of Wanderers' crossbar in the 10th minute.

But the visitors drew first blood after 15 minutes as Searle put in a high-lobbed header from Delaney's free kick. Some rated it a brilliant goal; others pointed an accusing finger at Rennie; but, before the interval, Wycombe grew to appreciate their lead more and more.

Tony Bradbury and Steve Lee both gave them 28th

minute frights, before Wycombe again worked to within shooting range of goal. Then Searle volleyed over the top from a difficult angle, and Pritchard lobbed an easy shot over the keeper but wide.

Foster again used his head to force a goal-line block by Fuschillo shortly before half-time.

After a disjointed start to the new period, standards dropped. But while Banbury continued to dither, Wycombe took a hold on themselves and eventually the entire park.

The 60th minute marked the end of Banbury altogether when Bernie ("the boot") Bremer crashed a drive on to the post, and Rennie, desperately trying to gather the rebound, swung it into his own net.

Home skipper, Cyril Beavon,

led a chorus of protests for off-side, but, after consulting his linesman, Referee Atwell let the score stand.

Banbury's annoyance did nothing but earn them two bookings in as many minutes, with Jeakings pulled up for a tackle on Anthony, which the winger exaggerated, a la Rodney Marsh in the 62nd minute, and Haynes for bringing down Searle 60 seconds later.

Young Ray Ball replaced Spiers in the sagging Banbury line-up, while more significantly, Keith Blunt took over from Hutchinson, and immediately set to work in the last ten minutes on building Wycombe raids via the right flank.

His promptings soon offered Searle a first-time volley, and in the 69th minute Pritchard scored the third goal from close range as Rennie dropped Blunt's cross with disastrous results.

Although Beavon hit the Wycombe bar with a minute to play, it was a token gesture, for Wanderers had stamped their ticket into the third qualifying round long before.

While Saturday hardly rates as a classic Wycombe display, and they had few solo stars—perhaps Powell earned most plaudits—Banbury fell victim to the very inconsistency that Wanderers' manager Brian Lee has always aimed to erase from his own club's football.

As a former manager of Wellington Town (now known as Telford), Lee knows well that it is the universal failing in Southern League football. So, Dunstable, be warned . . .

BANBURY UNITED: S. Rennie; T. Jeakings, C. Beavon, S. Lee, R. Haynes, C. Moulds, A. Hellyer, A. Foster, C. Riley, R. Spiers (sub.: R. Ball, 70th min.), A. Bradbury.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: K. O'Brien; P. Fuschillo, C. Gale, E. Powell, J. Delaney, B. Baker, G. Anthony, L. Pritchard, K. Searle, B. Bremer, J. Hutchinson (sub.: K. Blunt, 80th min.).

Referee: Mr. C. Atwell (Northampton).
Attendance: 2,787.
GOALSCORERS: Wycombe—Searle (15), Rennie (60 o.g.), Pritchard